

2 July 1974

MEMORANDUM

SUBJECT: The State of Soviet Analysis in CIA

1. A memorandum addressing a subject as broad as the status of Sovietology in CIA easily could have the effectiveness of a shotgun at long range, that is, cover the target broadly but to no effect. To forestall that possibility, this memorandum will focus on just three aspects of the analysis of Soviet affairs in CIA--the appropriate use of the small group of trained Sovietologists, bureaucratic barriers to better analysis, and the current direction of the Office of Political Research.*

2. Analysis of Soviet affairs in CIA falls primarily into three broad categories--economic, military and political. Because intelligence sources and methods are particularly well-suited to gathering information on Soviet economic and military performance and capabilities, Intelligence analysts in these areas currently are doing rather well in providing the policymaker with accurate and useful information.

3. Political analysis of Soviet affairs, on the other hand, is both more subjective and more difficult. The political analyst is called upon (a) to analyze and explain past events, and (b) to predict Soviet intentions. The first task is being performed well by Intelligence specialists; analytical papers of this type repeatedly have received compliments from the highest levels of the government. It is the second or predictive task, however, that holds greatest interest for the policymaker. And it is precisely in this task that political analysts face the most difficult obstacles and possess the fewest assets. Much of the problem is inherent in the thankless task of trying to predict the intentions of any political leader or group of leaders, a problem compounded many times over when dealing with a closed and culturally dissimilar society such as that of the Soviet Union.

*This memorandum addresses only the topic of Soviet analysis, but it should be evident that the problems and related recommendations would probably be similar in other areas.

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4. While many of the problems affecting the quality of Intelligence analysis of Soviet intentions are not susceptible to resolution or even diminution by Intelligence managers, there are at least three that could be remedied or at least ameliorated:

a. Analysts with experience and specialized training in Soviet politics and history are often "promoted" out of analytical positions, thus squandering an important Intelligence asset.

b. Necessary bureaucratic divisions of labor (OER, OSR, OPR) have had the effect of encouraging narrow perspective on the part of specialists in each area; few analysts are knowledgeable in areas of Soviet affairs beyond their own.

c. The relatively small group of Soviet analysts whose experience and talent resulted in their selection for OPR are not being employed on short or near term projects of important policy interest such as NSSM/NSDM responses, NIEs, policy support memoranda, and even major analytical articles for the NID.

5. The following recommendations may prove helpful in coming to grips with the above problems.

a. Experienced and trained Soviet analysts should be assigned with care and provided with incentives to remain "on the line," that is, not forced to move out of analysis or substance to obtain promotions or job satisfaction. It is important not only that career Soviet specialists have the opportunity to rise to Grade 15, but also that psychic incentives be further developed to reinforce the analyst's self-esteem and job satisfaction and thence contentment to remain an analyst. Such incentives should also be developed so as to encourage originality of thought, analytical imagination, and greater cross-fertilization of ideas. The quality of analysis clearly is diminished by the simple fact that the analyst sitting at his desk day in, day out becomes complacent, his perspective narrow, and his perceptions stale.

b. Arrangements should be made for the rotation of individual Soviet analysts from one office to another (i.e. OPR to OER, OSR to OPR, etc.) on a regular though limited basis. Assignments of six months to a year would not only allow, say, a political analyst to gain useful knowledge about Soviet strategic programs or the Soviet

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economy, but would also bring a new perspective to the work of analysts in those areas. It seems indisputable that such cross-fertilization would improve the analysis of all and at the same time develop contacts for future consultation among Soviet specialists in different areas.

c. OPR appears to be moving in the direction of becoming another Special Research Staff (recently deceased), programming long term research projects on topics often not relevant to current policy issues. A situation in which our best Sovietologists have little or no role in current or near term support is unsatisfactory and a misapplication of Intelligence resources. Consideration should be given to organizing OPR's Soviet staff so as to derive maximum benefit from the analysts' expertise. The Staff, small though it is, should be organized so that analysts are assigned to research projects (such as those currently programmed), to near term projects (NSSMs/NSDMs, NIEs, etc.) and to current support (policy support memoranda for the Secretary of State and NSC Staff, preparation of analytical articles for the NID, and so forth). Thus, in each of these important areas where Intelligence is asked to make contributions, its best qualified Soviet experts will have focused on the problem.

6. Finally, it may come as a surprising and dismaying fact that the number of trained and experienced Soviet analysts is probably too small to perform all of the important tasks noted above. Managers should realize that there is a need for career Sovietologists--especially those skilled in Soviet internal affairs--and that little effort is being devoted either to recruiting them from the academe or to selecting talented analysts in other areas of the Agency for formal (i.e. not just "on-the-job") training in Soviet affairs.

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